

A LONG-ABANDONED
FACTORY. SOMEWHERE
IN QUEENS.



TUNK
TUNK
TUNK

YOUR SECURITY HERE IS *OUTSTANDING*,
THINKER. I COULD ONLY DISCOVER FIVE
WAYS IN THAT DIDN'T REQUIRE THE
USE OF FORCE.

RICHARDS!

AND ONLY
TWO THAT WOULD
HAVE ESCAPED
YOUR ATTENTION.

HOW
DID YOU
FIND ME?

I'M A GENIUS.
ONCE I PUT MY MIND
TO SOMETHING--

MY INTELLECT
IS ALSO NOT
INCONSIDERABLE,
RICHARDS--



CALL OFF
YOUR LAPDOG.
I'M NOT
INTIMIDATED.

SURE YOU
ARE. I CAN LIGHT
MYSELF ON
FIRE.



WHAT DO YOU
INTEND TO DO WITH
ME? I DON'T HAVE
ANY OUTSTANDING
WARRANTS.

THIS ISN'T
THAT KIND OF
VISIT. I NEED
A FAVOR.



I WANT
YOU DEAD. WHY
SHOULD I HELP
YOU?

BECAUSE THAT
BUSINESS WITH THE
PUPPET MASTER HAD
YOUR FINGERPRINTS
ALL OVER IT.



PROVE IT.

ARE YOU SAYING
YOU DIDN'T MAKE A
SINGLE MISTAKE? THAT
IF I INVESTED, SAY, TEN
MINUTES OF UNINTERRUPTED
THOUGHT TO CONNECTING
YOU TO THOSE CRIMES,
THAT I'D FAIL?

WHAT
ARE THE ODDS,
THINKER?



WHAT CAN
I DO FOR YOU,
DOCTOR
RICHARDS?



I HATE THIS PLACE.

YOU SHOULD BE HONORED. MOST OF LES CARRIERES DE PARIS ARE, HOW DO YOU SAY? OFF-LIMITS.



BIG HONOR, ANAIS. I GIT TA TAKE A SHORTCUT THROUGH A MASS GRAVE.



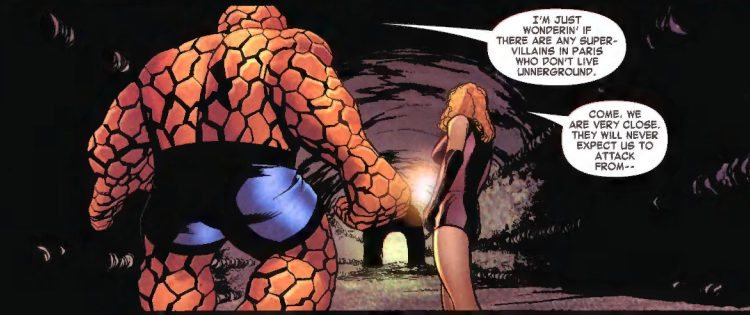
THERE ARE OVER 300 KILOMETERS OF TUNNELS HERE. IT IS NOT A SHORTCUT.

IT IS A WAY TO SNEAK INTO THE SECRET HYDRA BASE THAT LE POCTEUR Q HAS DISCOVERED.



SO WHY CAN'T LE POCTEUR Q OR SOME OF THE OTHER HEROS DES PARIS TAKE OUT THE HYDRA BASE?

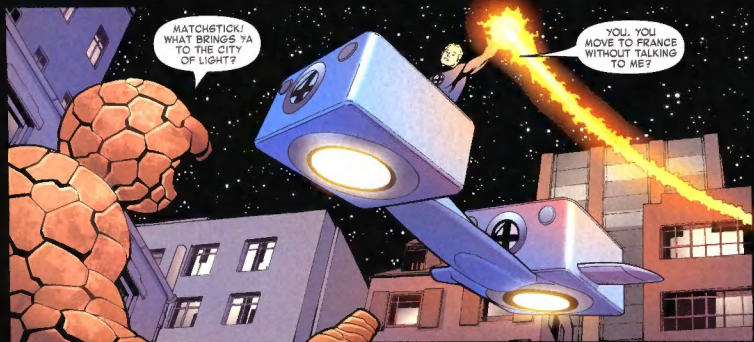
MY GREAT STONE OURS DE NOUNOURS PRETENDS HE DOES NOT WISH TO VANQUISH EVIL, BUT ANAIS, SHE KNOWS BETTER.



I'M JUST WONDERIN' IF THERE ARE ANY SUPER-VILLAINS IN PARIS WHO DON'T LIVE UNDERGROUND.

COME, WE ARE VERY CLOSE. THEY WILL NEVER EXPECT US TO ATTACK FROM--





PROBABLY NOT,
BUT HE IS HAVING
A REALLY TOUGH
TIME. ALL OF
US ARE.

FOSTER
WAS A GOOD
BUDDY--

--REMEMBER WHEN
WE USEDTA ALL PLAY
POKER?--



I THINK WE'RE
PLAYING POKER RIGHT
NOW. THE STAKES
JUST GOT SERIOUS,
IS ALL.

MEBBE
SO.



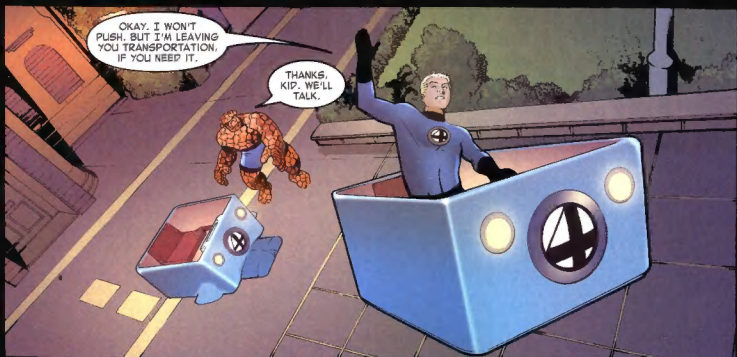
WE NEED
YOU, BEN.
PLEASE COME
BACK.

I'LL THINK
ABOUT IT.



OKAY. I WON'T
PUSH. BUT I'M LEAVING
YOU TRANSPORTATION,
IF YOU NEED IT.

THANKS,
KID. WE'LL
TALK.



THE BAXTER BUILDING.
MANHATTAN.

I'VE NEVER ALLOWED ANYONE
ELSE IN HERE. IT'S MY PRIVATE
SANCTUARY. A PLACE WHERE
I CAN THINK.

ALL OF THESE
EQUATIONS, YOU'RE
WORKING OUT ONE
PROBLEM.

SOCIAL
DYNAMICS...

YOU MAY BE THE
ONLY PERSON ON
EARTH EQUIPPED
TO CHECK MY
CONCLUSIONS.

THIS IS BRILLIANT.
BEYOND ANYTHING I'VE
EVER ACHIEVED.

WHEN I WAS 12 YEARS OLD I
READ "FOUNDTATION," A SCIENCE
FICTION NOVEL BY ISAAC ASIMOV.
EVEN THEN IT WAS UNUSUAL FOR
ME TO READ ANYTHING BESIDES
NON-FICTION...

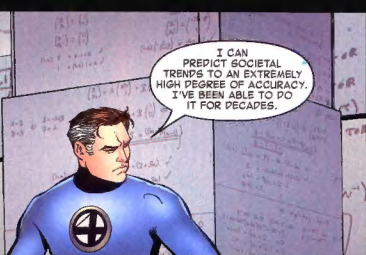
NO WONDER I
NEVER BEAT YOU.
I WAS A CAVEMAN,
BRAGGING ABOUT
FIRE AND YOU WERE
SPLITTING THE
ATOM.

...BUT THIS BOOK HAD AN IDEA IN IT THAT
EXCITED MY IMAGINATION. ASIMOV CALLED
IT **PSYCHOHISTORY**.

IT WAS A
FICTIONAL BRANCH
OF SCIENCE THAT USED
EQUATIONS TO PREDICT
FUTURE TRENDS BY
MATHEMATICALLY
MODELING HISTORY.

AND YOU LIKED IT
SO MUCH THAT YOU
INVENTED IT.

IT WAS THE
FIRST ENTIRELY
NEW FIELD I EVER
CREATED.

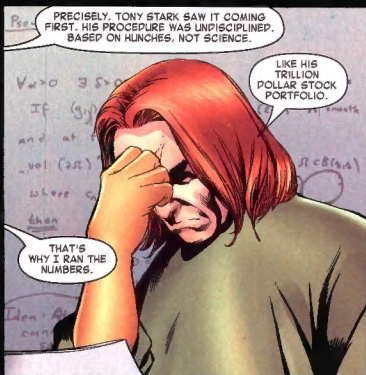


I CAN PREDICT SOCIETAL TRENDS TO AN EXTREMELY HIGH DEGREE OF ACCURACY. I'VE BEEN ABLE TO DO IT FOR DECADES.



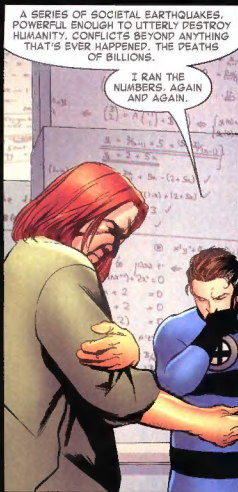
IT'S USELESS FOR PREDICTING THE ACTIONS OF INDIVIDUALS. YOU MAY AS WELL TRY TO PREDICT WHEN A PARTICULAR NUCLEUS WILL DECAY IN AN ISOTOPE. IMPOSSIBLE.

BUT YOU CAN PREDICT WHEN THE ENTIRE RADIOACTIVE ISOTOPE WILL BE SAFE.



THAT'S WHY I RAN THE NUMBERS.

LIKE HIS TRILLION DOLLAR STOCK PORTFOLIO.



A SERIES OF SOCIETAL EARTHQUAKES, POWERFUL ENOUGH TO UTTERLY DESTROY HUMANITY. CONFLICTS BEYOND ANYTHING THAT'S EVER HAPPENED. THE DEATHS OF BILLIONS.

I RAN THE NUMBERS, AGAIN AND AGAIN.



EVERY SCENARIO, WORSE THAN THE PREVIOUS. NO FORCE THAT COULD BE APPLIED ANYWHERE TO MAKE A BETTER OUTCOME, UNTIL...

THE SUPERHUMAN REGISTRATION ACT.



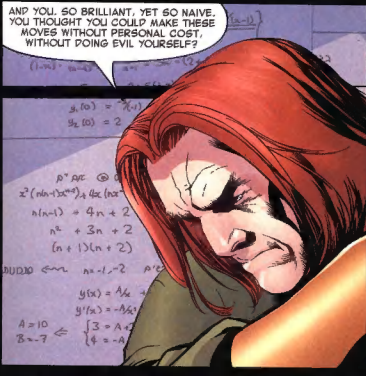
THAT WAS ONLY PART OF IT. MANY DISTASTEFUL ACTS WOULD HAVE TO OCCUR, VERY CLOSELY TOGETHER, IN PRECISELY THE RIGHT ORDER, IF NOT...

SO YOU CHOSE THE LESSER OF TWO EVILS.

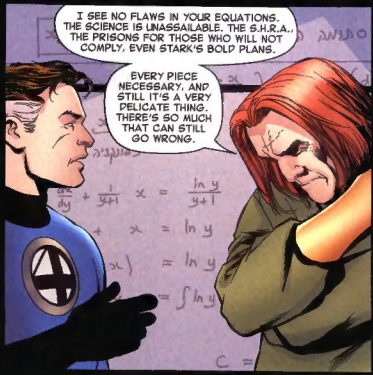


THE LESSER OF THIRTY-ONE EVILS, EACH MORE HORRIBLE THAN THE NEXT...

IT WAS THE ONLY POSSIBLE CHOICE. IN THE OTHER SCENARIOS, MANKIND DOES NOT SURVIVE.



AND YOU, SO BRILLIANT, YET SO NAIVE. YOU THOUGHT YOU COULD MAKE THESE MOVES WITHOUT PERSONAL COST, WITHOUT DOING EVIL YOURSELF?



I SEE NO FLAWS IN YOUR EQUATIONS. THE SCIENCE IS UNASSAILABLE. THE S.H.R.A., THE PRISONS FOR THOSE WHO WILL NOT COMPLY, EVEN STARK'S BOLD PLANS.

EVERY PIECE NECESSARY, AND STILL IT'S A VERY DELICATE THING. THERE'S SO MUCH THAT CAN STILL GO WRONG.



STARK DOESN'T HAVE THE MIND TO APPRECIATE THE SUBTLETIES OF YOUR EQUATIONS.

BUT HE DOES HAVE THE GUT INSTINCTS OF A FUTURIST AND THE POLITICAL SENSE TO KNOW THAT HIS ACTIONS WOULD MAKE HIM REVILED AMONG HIS FORMER FRIENDS IN THE SUPER HERO COMMUNITY.



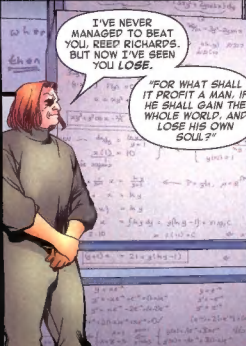
AND HE'S MAN ENOUGH TO DO WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE, EVEN KNOWING FULL WELL WHAT IT WILL COST HIM.

FEW OUTSIDE OF THIS ROOM WILL EVER UNDERSTAND THE SACRIFICE HE'S MADE, EVEN IF HE WINS.



AND THEN THERE'S YOU.

UNDERSTANDING EVERY INTRICACY OF THE BIG PICTURE, WHILE BLINDLY WALKING FURTHER AND FURTHER DOWN THE PATH OF EVIL.



I'VE NEVER MANAGED TO BEAT YOU, REED RICHARDS. BUT NOW I'VE SEEN YOU LOSE.

"FOR WHAT SHALL IT PROFIT A MAN, IF HE SHALL GAIN THE WHOLE WORLD, AND LOSE HIS OWN SOUL?"



YOU CAN SHOW YOURSELF NOW, MRS. RICHARDS.

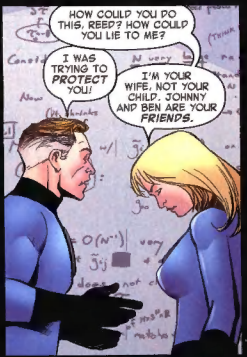
SO IT'S NOT THE LAW, OR YOUR POOR, PERSECUTED UNCLE.

SUE?! HOW DID YOU KNOW SHE WAS HERE?



YOUR METHODOLOGY IS, AS YOU SAY, USELESS FOR PREDICTING THE ACTIONS OF ANY SINGLE PERSON. I HAVE ANOTHER TECHNIQUE FOR THAT.

IT'S CALLED "COMMON SENSE."



HOW COULD YOU DO THIS, REED? HOW COULD YOU LIE TO ME?

I WAS TRYING TO PROTECT YOU!

I'M YOUR WIFE, NOT YOUR CHILD. JOHNNY AND BEN ARE YOUR FRIENDS.



BUT VAL AND FRANKLIN ARE MY CHILDREN, AND I'M GOING TO DO WHATEVER IT TAKES TO SAVE THEIR LIVES.

I DON'T BUY IT, REED. WE'VE BEATEN THE OPDS BEFORE, JUST BY DOING THE RIGHT THING. I'M WITH CAPTAIN AMERICA.

WE'RE GOING TO BEAT THE OPDS AGAIN.



NO. DON'T YOU SEE? YOU'RE NOT.

TO BE CONCLUDED...